

The *Humboldt Bay Trails Feasibility Study* sought ideas, recommendations and concerns from public agencies and the general public throughout the region. Input was gathered, considered, and, in some cases, further researched and incorporated into the proposals and recommendations described within this document.

While the public and professional input received was overwhelmingly positive and in favor of access development around the bay, there are some concerns associated with the development of trails and coastal access around the bay. Appropriate steps will have to be taken to avoid conflicts with other land uses, preserve habitat and address the concerns of management agencies, concerned groups and individuals.

IXA AGENCY AND ORGANIZATIONAL INPUT

NRS sought the input of many different agencies and organizations that have direct professional interest in access issues in the Humboldt Bay area. Informal meetings were conducted with the following local, state and federal governments and interest groups.

IXB1 FEDERAL AGENCIES

- Humboldt Bay Wildlife Refuge
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Bureau of Land Management

IXB2 STATE AGENCIES

- Department of Fish & Game
- California Coastal Commission
- Caltrans District 1

IXB3 LOCAL AGENCIES AND INTEREST GROUPS

- City of Eureka and the Eureka Trails Committee
- City of Arcata
- Table Bluff Reservation - Wiyot Tribe
- Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District
- County of Humboldt
- North Coast Railroad Authority
- Humboldt Bay Interagency Task Force
- Redwood Region Audubon Society
- Dunes Forum
- Blue Ox Millworks
- Water Trails Task Force of the Humboldt Trails Coalition



Workshops held in November, 2000 produced valuable comments.

IXA PUBLIC SENTIMENT

The general public was informed of the Humboldt Bay Trails project during a **major public outreach effort** in the fall of 2000. Information was posted, mailed, emailed, and broadcast by radio, television and newsprint about the project and opportunities to give input. The public participated in the project through three workshops, written surveys, and individual contact with NRS staff in person, by phone and e-mail.

Three public workshops were held in different communities around the bay in November, 2000: Humboldt Hill, Arcata, and Eureka. The workshops were collectively attended by almost 200 people. NRS staff received useful information and guidance for project research.

Surveys were created to gain additional information about how and where people currently access the bay and what types of access improvements they would support. The surveys were not designed to provide statistically significant data, but merely to provide some indications about current and desired bay access. Surveys were provided at all public workshops, and participants were encouraged to take and distribute them to be mailed in. Approximately one-third of the 80 completed were received in the mail. Information gathered by survey is summarized in [Appendix D](#).

In addition to verbal comments from meeting, a few **email and phone responses** were received expressing support for the project and lending suggestions for project ideas.

One letter was received as input to the project from the Humboldt County Farm Bureau, who expressed concerns about problems with trails near their lands. The Bureau feels trails are a ‘direct conflict with agriculture’ and that they would have a negative impact. The Farm Bureau urges that all trails proposed on private lands should be ‘purchased with public funds, approved by the voters, purchased from willing sellers and have a long-term plan for construction and maintenance’.

Overall, a great deal of very useful **input** was received, many questions were asked and answered, and much interest and enthusiasm was generated at the workshops and through other publicity efforts. The following is a summary of important topics gained through public input.

- **General Comments:** Most attendees and respondents want a commuter bicycle path between Arcata and Eureka; there was a lot of support to protect birds and wildlife particularly in the Elk River area; safety was very important and in troublesome areas, volunteer patrols were recommended; trash clean up at access facilities was also important and regular volunteer cleanup crews was recommended; provision of more and improved interpretive and cultural information was important; development of dog-walking parks was supported.



Workshops included slide shows, graphic illustrations, maps, aerial photos, and comment boards and forms.



Concerns about trail compatibility with livestock were raised by the Farm Bureau.

- **Rail-Trails:** Many comments were made throughout all three public workshops regarding use of railroads for trails. There is support to see a multi-use trail along the entire bay on the railroad grade if the railroad cannot function in the future.
- **Water Trails:** The public and agencies had many additional opportunities to comment and recommend ideas for ‘water trails’, but there was generally little participation. Ideas included: existing boat ramps/docks need to be more paddler friendly; placement of floating trail/navigational markers so paddling would be safer and have less impact on wildlife; improvements to boat access from the Arcata Marsh parking area and Mad River Slough; creation of a Boating Map & Guide; better public transportation between launches so shuttle trips are possible; and navigational, mudflat depth and tide info should be posted at launch sites.
- **Public Facilities:** Provide parking and restrooms; trail access points should be linked to public transportation and carpool facilities; provide bicycle parking, especially in places where bikes are not allowed on trails; provide good signage on the trails; include bird viewing platforms and areas.
- **Information and Marketing:** Trails are a tourist attraction; trail maps and boat maps should be developed and also displayed at trailheads; market ‘water trails’.
- **Challenges:** In agricultural areas, ranchers are concerned trail users would disturb livestock; around the bay there are many wetland issues and mitigation considerations; challenge to build trails which satisfy the wide variety of users - bike commuters need to get from ‘point A to B’ quickly, while recreationists want scenery and/or exercise; landowner easements; and hunting allowed in various areas conflicts with coastal access.

Early **administrative** draft copies of the *Study* were circulated for review by and input from agencies with priority projects.

A **draft Study** was widely circulated to all agencies and organizations with direct interests in proposed or identified projects for a comprehensive review. The draft was also made available by download on the web, and parties previously stating interest in the *Study* were notified.

Letters and emails providing commentary and **substantive input** on the document were provided by the Coastal Commission, Caltrans District 1, and the City of Arcata. Edited documents or suggested edits were provided by the City of Eureka, the Table Bluff Reservation-Wiyot Tribe, and by a member of the Redwood Region Audubon Society. Nearly all suggestions were incorporated into this final printing of the *Study*.



Local paddlers were polled for information and input on water trails.